

# Staying a Star, now that JSC is one

By Mary Peterson

It's axiomatic among actors in Hollywood that you're only as good (bankable) as your last picture. And so it is with the Voluntary Protection Program Star that JSC so proudly earned, as Occupational Safety and Health Administration VPP representatives announced on May 14.

In a ceremony this fall, the center will receive the coveted VPP Star flag, a symbol of occupational safety and health excellence.

But, what about retaining VPP Star status?

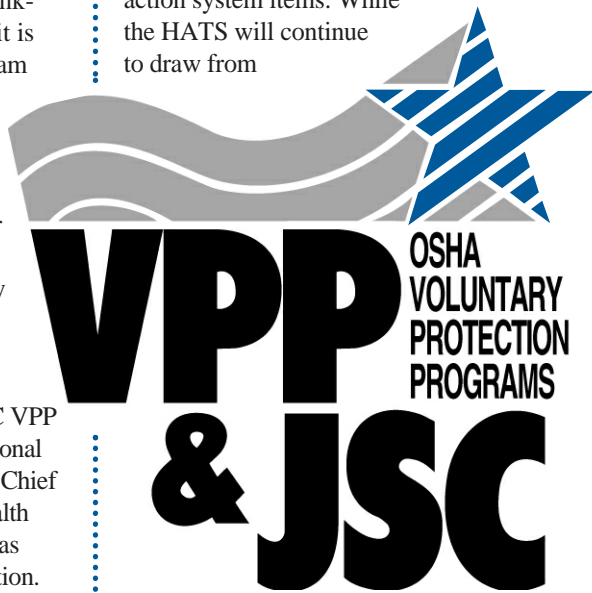
This question was asked of the JSC VPP Coordinator Stacey Menard, Occupational Safety and Quality Assurance Branch Chief Elmer Johnson, and Occupational Health Officer Sean Keptra, each of whom was deeply involved in VPP on-site education.

"We have had many calls from JSC employees since the announcement," said Menard. "They have asked, 'What now?' 'What were the results of the OSHA-VPP visit?' and 'Where do we go from here?'"

"One of the best places to start," Menard said, "is on the JSC Web page itself. Besides a wealth of information about VPP, employees will find the OSHA-VPP On-site Review Team results."

In the weeks to come, employees can expect to see a number of changes and

improvements, including the centralization of the Hazard Abatement Tracking System (HATS) that will also contain corrective action system items. While the HATS will continue to draw from



locations all across the site, the information will be entered into one database that will be accessible by everyone and can be narrowed easily to specific searches.

Plans are to institute, within the year, a "Safety Through Everyone's Participation" course, which will be modeled after the successful Senior Managers' Safety Course.

Employees can also expect quarterly inspections, hazard recognition training, and the investigation of mishaps and first-

aid cases, along with full documentation of these activities.

"The Occupational Health Office will be working much more closely with both the safety people and the hygienists on

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mishap and first-aid investigations to be sure these are fully reviewed and documented," said Keptra. "We will be keeping a much more watchful eye on what happens to our many environmental health surveys and studies. We don't want the results of these efforts to wind up in somebody's desk, never to be seen again. We plan to see that notices are posted and

convenient for employee consumption. If there's a problem with the water, for example, we want it known."

Employees will be encouraged to take part in facility inspections. Not only will this give them an insight as to how safe their work area may or may not be, they will learn to recognize what constitutes a real or potential hazard.

"Another thing employees need to be aware of is that we can't 'rest on our laurels' for three years with the attitude that our safety program is in good shape as far as OSHA is concerned," said Menard. "While three years is the normal review time, we can expect to see OSHA auditors more frequently because many of our contractors are either applying for VPP status or have plans to apply." Because the JSC-contractor relationship is so integrated, OSHA's assessment of mutual safety and health efforts will be also.

Plans are well under way for the VPP Star flag ceremony and celebration. A number of dignitaries will be on hand, including NASA Administrator Daniel S. Goldin.

"Everything employees have been doing – involvement, participating in JSC Safety Action Team projects, doing safety walkarounds, being safe personally, reporting close calls, reporting things that are not up to speed – these are the things that will keep us a Star," said Johnson. ■

## Conservationscape: *protecting the environment*

By Sandra Parker

The conservation landscape or "conservationscape" in front of Bldg. 30 has received an overwhelmingly positive response from JSC employees. During the recent JSC Earth Day event, more than 300 people stopped by for a tour of the landscape by Mark Fox, the landscape designer. In addition, each participant received a native plant seedling and information.

Most employees are interested in the names of the plants, how big they will get, and how often they will bloom. The Conservation Landscape Working Group is developing a sign to be located at the conservationscape and pamphlets to provide more information about each plant and ideas for creating a conservationscape at home. In the interim, a complete list of all the plants along with details about the requirements for growing each plant may be obtained from Sandra Parker of JSC's Environmental Services Office.

The conservationscape is a result of a partnership between JSC and Clean Water for Armand Bayou. Clean Water for Armand Bayou is a cooperative effort among the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, the Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board and neighboring Armand Bayou Nature Center to demonstrate effective techniques for reducing water pollution from contaminated surface water runoff. Clean Water for Armand Bayou contacted the Environmental Services Office to see if JSC would be interested in planting a high-profile demonstration landscape to be used to educate employees about how they can promote clean water by reducing the use of pesticides and fertilizers at home.

As a result, the Conservation Landscape Working Group, a working group of the Environmental Stewardship Subcommittee, was formed. Members include Ivy



JSC Photo S99-05715 by Mark Sowa

Conservation Landscape Working Group members, from left, include John Jacob, Texas Agricultural Extension Service's Clean Water for Armand Bayou; Tom Scarsella, Dyncorp; Colin Shackleford, Clean Water for Armand Bayou; Pat Kolkmeier, Center Operations' Facility Engineering Division; Sandy Parker, kneeling, Center Operations' Environmental Services Office; Jo Kines, Center Operations' Environmental Services Office. Not pictured: Ivy Alexander, project manager, Tolman Grounds/BRSP; Mark Fox, Mark Fox Landscaping.

Alexander, project manager for Tolman Grounds; Pat Kolkmeier of the Facility Engineering Division;

Tom Scarsella, Dyncorp; Parker and Jo Kines of the Environmental Services Office; John Jacob and Colin Shackleford of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service's Clean Water for Armand Bayou project; and Fox of Mark Fox Landscaping. Alexander,

with her extensive knowledge about native plants used at JSC, worked closely with Fox to determine which plants would be appropriate for the landscape. Fox provided the overall landscape design. Shackleford worked with TAES to provide a low-flow irrigation system for the landscape. Shackleford and Jacob are working with Steve Harding, the creator of the signs for the Houston Zoo, to provide a small sign and pamphlets for the conservationscape.

For more information on where to find native plants and seeds, Texas Park and Wildlife provides a native plant and seed source list at its Web site: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/plant](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/plant). The Environmental Protection Agency also provides information at its Web site: [www.epa.gov/greenacres](http://www.epa.gov/greenacres). For more information on the conservationscape, contact Parker at x33119.

Clean Water for Armand Bayou has helped to install several conservationscapes in the area. JSC employees are encouraged to visit the Hanson House at the Jimmy Martyn Farm located at the Armand Bayou Nature Center, the Clear Lake Community Center, Krueger Park in the Meadow Green subdivision, and the St. Thomas Apostle School in Nassau Bay for more examples of landscaping with native and resource-efficient plants.

Environmentally beneficial landscaping practices are encouraged at federal facilities. Because the federal government owns and landscapes large areas of land, we can provide the leadership needed to encourage the use of native plants and thereby help to reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, while minimizing contaminated storm water runoff. Landscaping practices, such as planting native shade trees around federal facilities, can reduce air-conditioning demands and can also provide innovative measures to comply with the energy consumption reduction goal established in Executive Order 12902, "Energy Efficiency and Water Conservation at Federal Facilities."

The extensive use of concrete and asphalt accelerates storm water runoff and creates flooding and erosion for communities that exist along streams and bayous. It also results in higher temperatures in urban areas. Increasing the use of native plants reduces damage from storm water runoff, reduces temperatures and energy costs, improves water quality and increases wildlife habitat. Data show that combined landscape installation and maintenance costs associated with native landscaping over a 10-year period may be one-fifth the cost of conventional landscape maintenance.

Also, standard lawn maintenance equipment creates a significant amount of air pollution. Did you know that a gasoline-powered lawn mower emits 11 times the air pollution as a new car for each hour of operation? Cost data also show that conventional sodded turf grasses may exceed \$12,000 per acre, while planting native prairie grasses and forbs costs only \$2,000 to \$4,000 per acre. There are several varieties of native grasses in the Bldg. 30 conservationscape for reference. ■